## BEAUTY'S SECRET

By ALAN MUIR. Author of "Vanity Hardware," "Golden Girls," Etc.

CHAPTER VL WIS TEMPLE REVIEWS HER CONDUCT.

The alers of the day were over. The while assault had been planned. In her bed-Mr. Barbara Temple sat like a general a largest the night before the battle. She was reve wing her forces, measuring their streath, settling the order in which they shusi advance Tale is important, however Sophia may af-

feet to despise it, that Prendergast's wealth. and what it will do for her, should be put before her tairly. I can trust Sibyl for that: no one would manage it better than Sibyl." she passed as her first company passed mentally before her to the battle. The army satisfied her. Then she fixed on the next . Duty-obedience, Sophia has always half great stress on these, and not in affectanon officer. O, no, she means what she save. Well t think when Goldmore talks to ber about a parent's authority-I think it will

And so the second company marched past under the general's approving eyes. Numfor three came in view.

effer affection for me is genuine. Dear girl" the little mother said, with a warming her heart, "she does love me! Well, what then! I love her, and I am doing the best for ber When Caroline tells her that this marrisce will satisfy me and make me happy, I aleve she will yield. And Car will do that for my, and do it effectively. Oh, yes; I trust

And so company three went by, and was approved. Which was number four? Yes. she remembered.

el wonder will Mr. Brent bear in mind what I told him! I think I sha'l drop him a true to refresh his memory and to bind him to school. If he manages well he might acremplish more than any; but he may blunder -may, he is the sort of man who will blunder

And so warned by a little frown from the commander, company four went by. Company five-Oh, well she knew it; with this to was to conquer.

-Prendergast-Prendergast; he is my mainsay after all. O, yes; he will touch Sophia at the very heart. And he will say all I wish. There is one thing about these serious people: they are half deceiving themselves and half breiving others, and so they assume a most valuable appearance of earnestness, Now, I could not, to save my life, pretend to be intensded in being useful; but I suppose I should be more telling in serious society if I Brendergast will sermonize about oppertunity and duty, and Sophia will listen, just as she listens at church-I can see her and the woman who listens to a suitor

ike Frendergast is-married!" And so the whole army was reviewed: the farces were irresistible; stroke after stroke, Sophia would be conquered at last. "And now let me see," the little mother

continued, throwing herself back in her chair as she pondered her own responsibility in the transaction. "I am a worldly woman; I am making a match for my daughter which is worldly wise-nothing more and nothing less, I am doing all I fairly can to urge her to this marriage, pressing her on by every means in my power. Well, am I wrong? Why, even on the showing of good people or romantic people I am marrying her to a man who is in every way likely to make her happy, although she may not yet acknowledge it. He is good, upright and kind. And then on my showing I am giving her a position in socety, snatching her from a mistaken engagement, from years of waiting which are sure to end in solitary disappointment or in wedded poverty. Give me for my daughters a life well carpeted, well cushioned, well furnished, well dressed, and my head for it if in ten years' time they are not the first to say to the old mother: 'You were right, after all. Yes, the good people talk about doing right and not pleasing yourself; I do right-and please myself, too. Sophy, Sophy, to-morrow night you will be engaged to Prendergast. 1 shall have done it; I have done it already. And if you drop a few romantic tears-why, har are soon wiped off; but wealth, fortune; these remain from day to day, and from year to year, and these make life, let saints and poets say what they please."

So having settled matters with her conscience in this frank and fearless way, our little mother laid her down to sleep; and she slept that light, semi-conscious slumber common with those who know that upon the coming day a great triumph shall be theirs.

CHAPTER VII. THE STAGE MANAGER FINISHES HER DAY'S

By what complicated mechanism Mrs. Barhara Temple arranged all that happened on this day I must not tell. The description of her successive artifices would fill a volume. Enough to say that she had settled the greet hes, the times, the persons, the places in very particular: the day was, indeed, occupled with the production of the drama of the spaler and the fly, and the powerful effects, the incidents, the plots, the traps in the

stage the rising and falling of the curtain, all were done at the instance of that renowned dramatic authoress and stage manger. Mrs. Barbara Temple. Having said this I shall without another syllable of explanution tell you what happened. All that and le said, and this only for explanation, is that she contrived without any suspicious considered to bring each of her subordinates into contact with Sophia between morning and evening of one day, and that the day when-still by her arrangementmake his proposal. If I were to follow all the windings of this day, the shiftings of scene from place to place, it would be very tedious; and after all, what is First, to declare the foresight and montrivance of our little mother; and sendally, to show how poor Sophia was enwith motives all impelling her to hand faith with Percival Brent. These ends

an be fully attained by the simple record of tragments of dialogue which bore the great event of that memorable day. STRYL AND SOPHIA-MONEY VS. LOVE. Believe me, Sophy, marriage is a lottery; I don't think after a month is over love makes

much difference.". Silve and this after the mention of young Brent same. She was reclining on a sofa, lesking very beautiful, but cold, proud and with plain tokens of disappointment amidst

and believe that," Sophia replied. "You led adways think so yourself." " was not married then," Sibyl answered;

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It was on the tip of Sophia's tongue to say: "If a girl of twenty-two marries a man of file three, is her view of marriage to be taken as the true one?"

Applica did not mean, you may be sure, to ad this home-thrusting question in any tauntway, but quietly and reasonably. She led lowever, that such a question must be hard all to her sister's feelings, and said noth-This led Sibyl to believe that her argument was taking effect.

plan she said, in a stern way alto-There her own, "marry Prendergast. He is weather good loo ing, and his tastes are like Now ask yourself, are you not more Is to be happy with such a man, more have your own way and please yourwith young Percival! Percival get you. If he remembers you, he make to marry you. If he marries may disappoint you as a husband. depender the number of chances which hat all to come right before you have any with him! And here is a man of where every one of your friends approves, men you admit you respect yourself, the which I call a spendid The Sophy, you can't refuse him! If Sibyl said, growing more and more sleven by her own argument, "you silly beyond expression. You won't Sophy; you can't-I know

ARCHIRALD GOLDMORE AND SOPHIA PRUDENCE VS. LOVE. "My dear Sophia," Goldmore said, taking her hand and speaking to her in a grave, fatherly way, and with intentions that were unmistakably, kind, "I wish to say a few words to you about my triend Prendergast." Poor Sophia turned red and pale almost in



"I have known him more or less intimately for years," the elephantine magnate continned. He talked as if he was dictating a testimonial. "A more upright, honorable man does not breathe. He is charitable and humane to a fault. Believe me, Sophia, I would not open my lips to you on the subject if I did not in my soul believe that Prendergast will make you truly a happy woman, and that he

is worthy of you. I can say nothing more in

his praise.' Sophia began to cry, not knowing where to turn, and Goldmore, taking upon himself almost unconsciously the paternal relation, gently patted her on the shoulder. Indeed, it seemed as if affairs had only to be pushed a little further for him to bestow upon her a paternal kiss.

"Marry Prendergast, Sophia," Goldmore continued, repeating unawares his wife's concise counsel. "You are of course free from all engagement to young Percival Brent. Remember, I have not a word to say of that young fellow but praise. Under the auspicious circumstances of your original engagement I considered it a happy event. And even when he left England, I thought perhaps things might turn out well for you both. Since then I have"-here he reflected on the interview with Mrs. Temple and her charges to him-"since then I have thought things over, Sophia, and I feel you ought to be-prudent."

"Prudent!" "prudent!" It was the word that had been rung in the poor girl's ears until she was ready to scream at the sound of

"And besides, Sophia," Goldmore continued, "your mother wishes it. I am far from saying that any girl is bound to consider even her parents in a matter so nearly concerning her personal happiness; but, Sophia, when the man is so very desirable, and when a parent's will is so very strongly expressed, I think a dutiful character like yours will-will weigh the matter. Sophia!" Sophia was really broken down now and sobbing piteously; and Goldmore, who would not have wounded her without cause on any consideration, judged that these tears were shed over the final wrench from Percival

"You are naturally agitated, dear girl," he went on, in his three-syllable style of speech. "You are a sympathetic nature, and you regret your late engagement. You are one of those women who are always delicate in your dealings with our sex-more delicate perhaps than most of us deserve. But, now that the thing is done, every hour your sorrow will diminish and your future will grow brighter. Don't cry any more, Sophia; you are acting prudently, and you have obeyed your parent."

III. CAROLINE AND SOPHIA-LOVE VS. LOVE. "Mind, Sophy," Car said, "if Prendergast was an elderly man, like Goldmore, I would not have had you marry him, not if he could have heeled your toots with diamonds. Don't you see how dull Sibyl is! It is nothing in the world but that she is tired of that old fellow. Now you may not think Egerton very clever or witty, but I assure you he is a capital husband, and I have grown fonder of him than I could have believed. I would not see you so mope! as Sibyl, not if mamma were to go on her knees to us. But really, Sophia, Prendergast is more than passable; he is very

"Well, but being agreeable does not make you love a man," Sophia ventured to say. "No." Car answered readily; "but when a man's character is such as you approve, and when his position and prospects are good, and when he is agreeable in addition, you are safer in marrying him-safer, do you hear, Sophy !- than you would be in marrying after the most romantic of court-hips."

Sophia was silent before Car's reasonable "Besides, Sophy"-now she came to her special appeal-"mamma is quite in terror lest you should refuse Prendergast. She has taken such a fancy to him. With his serious ways one would hardly have expected that; but so it is Prendergast will be making mamma a saint one of these days if he enters the family-he has such an influence over her. It was not altogether fair to Car to hold out such a motive to her sister. She well knew how Sophia bewailed her mother's infatuated worldliness; and how, in her gentle, daughterlike way, she was always trying to make her mother less of a pagan and a mocker. This one sentence of Car's told more with Sophia than all that had been said to her before. She was in that melancholy mood when women, and men, too, often make life-long sacrifices at the bidding of religion. What if Prendergast did really

and a wiser woman! She sighed, and looked up at Car receptively. "No doubt of it," Car said, in a kind of reply to her sister's glance. "Mamma will be the happiest woman in England if you marry him. And she has been a kind mother to'us, and we ought to please her if we can. And, esides, as I said, he may really be useful to namma, she thinks so much of him.

make her mother in her last days a better

Divided was Sophia's heart, and her loyal will was shaken when she left her sister. Who could stand such a succession of argument and appeal? or, if we choose to bring in a new metaphor, what citadel could resist such a number of battering rams, managed by that eminent pagan military engineer, Mrs. Barbara Temple! Yes; Sophia was feeling the weakness of her sex: "I faint," "I yield."

IV. EGERTON AND SOPHIA-IDIOCY VS. LOVE. As with sad steps she was walking down the avenue, she was startled by the apparition of Egerton, who suddenly appeared, peeping over the top of a holly bush. He glanced apprehensively round, like a paid assassin in a tragedy, and then, coming round the holly bush with long secret Tarquin strides, he advanced to Sophia's side.

"Come here, he said, in an awful whisper. And he returned behind the holly bush as he came forth. Sophia did not know what to think; but, waiving his manner in her estimate of the position, she came to the conclusion that he had got a hedgehog, or some other natural curiosity which he wished her to inspect; so she followed him. No soonerwas she at his side than, with three or four more furtive glances, he stooped to her ear, and, in a whisper of the profoundest caution,

said: "Sophia!" take my advice, and go and get married. It's an awfully nice thing. You may take it from me that it is not so much matter whom you marry as the thing itself. Do that, and all the rest will follow. Don't let out to any one that I told you." And then, with an air of secrecy which was frightfully suggestive, and the same long and ghostly strides, he made for the house, leaving her to resume her path as best

she might. V. THE REV. ANTHONY BRENT AND SOPHIA -DESPONDENCY VS. LOVE. "Miss Temple," the clergyman s id, with a melancholy air, not the least feigned, although, by casting a gloom over his conversation, it greatly furthered Mrs. Barbara Temple's ends, "times have changed, changed indeed. I had a letter from my son two days

How that good little heart leaped to hear it! Percival! he seemed near her once again, and she would be strengthened now. "How is Percival?" she asked gently.

"Pretty well," the rector replied: "tolerably well, I may say. But be writes in bad spirits. Little wonder; his prospects are very uncertain. I don't think he will ever return to England."

"He meant to come back when he left," poor Sophia said, turning sick at heart after ber little gush of pleasure. "That I know," the rector answered, in the same downcast tone. "But his intention will change, if it has not changed already. Per-cival has to face a life of struggle. I was

very glad to find that you and he had quite broken off from each-other." "We wanted to act prudently," the poor girl said. O, how delighted she would have been had the rector, in the remotest way, recognized that an understanding existed be-

tween them

"It was prudent," he continued. "To you such a thing could only have meant bondage and disappointment; and to him - well, Sophia, greatly as I like you, I don't really think Percival would have been so likely to prosper had he been still engaged to you." "I could not bear the thon ht of injuring 'him," the poor thing said. She was on the edge of a fit of crying, but Mr. Brent, never a man of observation, and now quite occupied with his own cares, did not notice her

"I am sure of that," he replied. "Of course that is why you so wholly detached yourself from him. It is better for both of you. Percival, as you know, has returned to the man with whom he resided when his health was delicate. This man-Warren-is getting advanced in life, and wants a helper in his business. Percival, I have no doubt, will get that appointment, for they are very fond of him-that is, I mean Warren and his daughter are very fond of him."

"Mr. Warren has a daughter, then?" Sophia

"Yes, he is a widower, and she is his only child. I think-indeed, I know-that she was rather soft on Percy when he lived there. In fact, one or two rather unnecessary letters followed him to England. I laughed then; now I cannot but think that if Percival manages the business well, and gets into the old man's good books, and-and marries little Bessie, as he used to call her-" "He called her little Bessie, did he?" Sophia

"Little Bessie-that was her name," the rector answered. "He always called her that. It meant nothing, of course. You see, they were a great deal together, and Percival says that in the colonies people are not so stiff as we are in England. He used to say he liked colonial manners. Well, to return-if he marries Bessie it might be a nice thing for him. Indeed, it will be his solitary chance i

It was a sore, an aching heart that lay in Sophia's gentle breast as she and her mother drove home. The poor girl had not the smallest suspicion that her mother had arranged all these nice litt'e thunderclaps; but even had she known it, the knowledge could not have blunted the dreadful edge of the rector's communication. However powerful her own friends had argued, they could not have affected her as Mr. Brent had done. It seemed as if the father spoke for his son It sounded like a message from the lover himself, saying "Let us part." And in the mists of her fears and doubts the figure of Bessie Warren rose before her, at Percy's side, seeing him day by day, at the head of the household of which he was to be a member. wealthy, and fond of Percy-known to him by a pet familiar name. What chance had she against this fatal Bessie Warren?

Little Mrs. Barbara Temple was no tyrant, and would not have inflicted any useless pain on her daughter. She saw Sophia out of the side of her eyes as they drove home, and marked her misery, and felt really sorry for her, but it was sorrow such as a humane surgeon feels for the shrinking patient on whom he is about to operate; it was all for Sophia's good. These tears would flow and then be gone, and after the dread and the operation, and the shrinking and the crying, there would be the world-the bright, prosperous world, wealth, fashion, ease, respect-all that station can secure and money can buy. O, no doubt of it! she was acting the part of a wise mother; and so, quenching her last misgiving, Mrs. Barbara Temple made ready for the final, the winning stroke in her grand matrimonial

CHAPTER VIII.

Mother and daughter sat down to dinner Sophia's face was full of care; but by some accident, or by the caprice of fate, she was beautifully dressed, and looked very charming in her sadness. The beautiful attire was not, indeed, very surprising, for Sophia gave such particular attention to dress, and was, besides, such a "colorist," that I don't suppose she had an unbecoming gown in her whole wardrobe. To-night she wore a dress of pearl gray with a tucker of white lace round the open front, and a garnet brooch, which I suppose she had pinned in by chance; but it was in the best taste. Indeed, if the poor heart-sick girl had spent two hours at her glass and dressed herself for rivalry or conquest, she could not have looked more lovely. Just as an accomplished writer when he is thinking least of form will throw off his most finished piece, so Sophia, who was a true mistress of the art of dress, did this evening, when her thoughts were far enough from the toilet, deck herself out in a way which most of all displayed her charms. Mrs. Barbara

Temple marked her as she sat. "When Prendergast comes," that keen witted woman said to herself (having arranged that he was to appear accidentally after dinner), "when Prendergast comes, and sees you, if the sight does not unlock his lips.

he is not the man I take him for!" Perceiving Sophia's melancholy air, the little mother assumed the same herself. She was taciturn, thoughtful, sighed, and in everything reflected her daughter's sadness. This was supreme high art; it was saying to Sophia, "if you are heavy at heart, so am I; I, too, am facing a great anxiety." And so effectually did she play her part that, toward the end of dinner, Sophia, rousing her self by an effort, tried to talk cheerfully. Mrs Barbara felt a thrill of reasonable pride in this recognition of her power as a successful dissembler. Instead of feeling low spirited she was, in truth, highly excited in view of her approaching triumph. She felt that Sophia was in her hands. The pensive look, timid voice, and downcast eyes, all told one story to her: the girl had no resistance left.

She would accept Prendergast that night. No soener had they got into the drawing room than Mrs. Barbara saked Sophia to sing "Yes, mamma," Sophia said, looking at

her wistfully. "I will sing or play or do anything you like." This compliant speech meant, and well the mother knew it: "If you would only use me for your own pleasure, how happy we both might be!" Mrs. Barbara Temple understood, but did not regard; she was bent on

Sophia sat down and began her favorite: "Oft in the Stilly Night;" and finely she sang it, the melancholy ditty serving as a vehicle for her own sorrows Her voice was a powerful contralto, and, without at all exerting herself unduly, she was able so to occupy her mother's ear that Prendergast entered the room unobserved, and was standing beside Mrs. Barbara before she knew it. The little mother gave him a sprightly nod of silent recognition not to disturb the song, and then, slowly turning her eyes from him to Sophia, and fixing them on her, she seemed to say:

"Is she not a woman worth winning?" And Prendergast met her returning look with a look of his own, full of tender admiration, which conveyed his thought in reply; and just then Sophia, ending her song, saw that Prendergast was behind her. Surprise and some other emotion, sent over her face the loveliest blush surely that ever woman wore, and it seemed to spread until her neck was touched with its conscious hue. Prendergast read it as an omen that at last she had begun to feel kindly toward him, and he could scarcely speak to her for the pleasu he felt. And Mrs. Barbara Temple, who never in her life made a mistake, was ready

to clap her hands. "She loves him! she loves him!" the little conqueror murmured to herself. "See what management does! O, what a woman I am!" Almost before another word was spoken, Mrs. Temple's maid came into the room, and, advancing to her mistress, said:

"Please, ma'am, is the letter ready!" "What letter, Jones!" "The letter, ma'am, you said was so very particular, which must go by to-night's post,

and which we was to be sure not to forget to This was delivered in recitation style, like something got carefully off by heart. "Dear me!" exclaimed Mrs. Temple, with

uplifted hands. "How could I have forgutten it! Sophia, my dear, you must entertain Mr. Prendergast for twenty minutes or half an hour. It is an important letter, and will take quite that time to write. How very stupid I have been!" And without a single glance at Prendergast the very stupid woman left the room, but not until she saw Sophia's blush return

with deeper glow. "Ah." she thought, "now for a pretty scene! O the merry days when we were young!" When our little mother returned to the

drawing room she saw Prendergast standing alone in the center of the floor. His look told her nothing; but as she came toward him, he said very earnestly:

"Mrs. Temple, your daughter is an angel!"
Victory! The little mother could have skipped on the carpet for triumph; but recollecting that it would not be business-like to seem too much delighted, she restrained berself, and said: "I see. She has accepted you."

"No, she has not." "Yes, yes; but that is only a girl's way; virtually she has accepted you, and you know

"Mrs. Temple, she will never marry me. "What do you mean?" The shock was great and Mrs. Temple found it hard to speak. "Simply that your daughter has explained to me her position and the state of her affections. She has been so kind, so frank, so like all I thought she must be, that I am more in love with her than ever. But I know the truth, and will no longer struggle against it." He dropped his head on his breast and said no more, and for nearly a minute the nimble little tongue and versatile little brain of his hostess were at fault. But she collected her spirits.

"Prendergast," she said in a tone that was dry and even contemptuous, "that is not the way to win a woman like Sophia." "Perhaps not," he answered: "but it is the only way I can follow." Even she was for the moment dumb, and he became silent again, but he roused himself and spoke afresh: "The fact is, I have been rebuked to-night. Ten years ago I loved a woman something like your daughter, and she died before our marriage. Over her grave I vowed to live for her memory, and that yow I kept until this year; and to-night, as Sophia was speak-

"Prendergast," Mrs. Barbara Temple said, with pointed acrimony, "the bell is near you.

ing to me, it seemed as if my own buried dear

one came from her abode of happiness and

Will you ring for tea?" It will be admitted by everybody that, from Mrs. Temple's point of view, her situation was decidedly irritating. She was angry with Prendergast, and bitterly angry with Sophia. To a plotting, planning nature like hers nothing is so vexatious as a failure such as this. She was working for Sophia's good; she had arranged everything so as to insure success: at the last moment Sophia stupidly spoils all! Wicked was the look with which she regarded her daughter, when, after Prendergast's departure, Sophia shyly stole into the room and took her seat at the tea table. Mrs. Barbara opened fire: "So, Sophia, Prendergast has roposed to you?" "Yes, mamma."

"And you have accepted his offer, of

The little woman put the question in this way, with a kind of concentrated viciousness which made Sophia tremble. "No, mamma," the poor girl said, doing what undoubtedly was wisest at the junc ture, and breaking into sobs. "I could not,

mamma, I could not marry min." "Sophia," the mother said, rising from her seat and standing before her daughter, "you are a weak girl. I don't say you have done wrong, but I say you are a weak girl. Weakness, of all things, I hate. Sibyl would not have acted in this way. Caroline would not. You have neither sense nor spirit, and it is mortifying to me to think that the daughter who is least like myself, and least dutiful, is the one with whom I must, I suppose, pass

the remainder of my life." This was a most unkind speech; but we must remember how bitterly the little woman was disappointed; and we must remember. too, that she did not often lose her temper. Sophia, who might perhaps at another time have defended herself, was really broken down by the succession of the day's excitement, and only sobbed the more. Her mother's last sarcasm had wounded her in-

"I don't care for crying," the mother went on, quite forgetting her better self and her own maxims of self-possession. "Really, Sophia, if you are so determined to have your own way, have the courage, too, and don't stand whimpering there. You can disobey me. You can fly in the face of everybody who cares for you. Then do carry it out. I had rather see you in a passion than as you are. Has anybody injured you! Have you not done as you wish? If you had accepted Prendergast against your will there would be an excuse for this pettishness and nonsense; but here you have had your own way, and now you must cry over it. It is all weakness-weakness-despicable weakness; and weakness-weakness-weakness," she repeated the word in successive sallies of

annovance, "I hate and despise." Weak and strong they certainly looked She with her compact figure b aced and erect, her stretched out hand, her declaiming attitude, her clear, resolute voice; Sophia bending like a willow, her face hidden, and one low sob following another in reply to her mother's taimts as they fell on her ear. But Temple got a lesson which led her to recall her bitter words, and to confess that the strength was not so entirely her own, nor the weakness so entirely her daughter's, as she imagined just now, while she was standing mistress in her own drawing room.

BOOK FIVE.

LADY BEAUTY'S SORROW.

CHAPTER I.

SOPHIA IN A NEW CHARACTER. Three weary hours dragged by that night before tired Sophia feel asleep, and sleep had no sooner closed her eyelids than she was

in the moment of wakening she felt to be charged with terror, broke her short slumber. "Sophia! Sophia!" she heard her mother uttering in her ear. Wide awake in an instant, and alarmed by the way in which her mother spoke, she sat up in bed. Mrs. Temple was standing beside her in her night dress, and, by the dim light of the lamp which burned in her room, she saw that the old woman's face was almost lifeless from its expression of intense alarm.

"Mamma! mamma!" she cried out. "What

roused. A low intense whisper, which even

is the matter?" "Hush! hush!" the mother answered, motioning her not to speak so loud. "If we are heard we shall be ki led." "What is the matter." Sophia asked again,

now almost as terrified as her mother,
"There are robbers in the house," Mrs. Temple answered, gasping for utterance. "Come here-softly." She motioned Sophia to the door, and, stepping out on the landing, bid her listen. All

was dark and still, and for a moment Sophia either heard or thou ht she heard her mother's heart thumping against her side. But the house was perfectly silent. "It's nothing, mamma," Sophia said at last, beginning to speak in her natural voice. "You made a mistake."

"Hush?" the mother cried, in the same terrified wisper as before. "I heard them in the house. I tried to ring the bell in my room and I find it wont work. It was quite right yesterday. This is a planned robbery. The servants are in it; we shall be killed, Sophia, murdered. O, what shall I do?"

And now, indeed; Sophia, straining her ears to listen, did hear a strange sound below stairs, and, bending over the balustrade, she plainly saw one gleam of light hastily vanishing, as if a lantern had for an instant been turned in the wrong direction. Nearly dead with fear she listened again, and soon after sounds in the entrance ball, as if a heavy box were being cautiously moved, convinced her that her mother was not wrong. She took the old woman's shaking hand and led her back to her own room.

"We must try my bell, mamma; we must ring that. The noise will frighten them."

"Try it, try it!" the mother answered. She could hardly articulate, and the words came from between her motionless lips as if she had not uttered them.

But when Sophia tried her own bell the result was simply that the wires pulled lightly and no sound was made. These, too, had been put out of order. "I knew it!" the old woman gasped. "The servants are in it. We shall both be mur-

dered here, in this room." And in truth the position was frightful enough. Their windows overlooked the garden, and to open these and cry for help would have been not only vain, but would have added danger to danger. Mrs. Temple had sunk upon the bed, and in the paralysis of terror seemed to be losing consciousness: and Sophia, although she tried to keep her

senses, felt as if she herself would swoon "There is nothing to be done," the old woman said. "We must wait till they come

and kill us. O, Sophia, Sophia! can't you do anything to save me?" It was surprising to see how utterly pros-trated with fear the active energetic woman had become in a few moments. And Sophia, the quiet and delicate girl, was even now growing more collected. She remembered that the former owner of the house had erected in one wing a kind of belfry, with a bell of sonorous tongue hanging in it; for he was a nervous householder, dwelling in fear of thieves. The girls knew this belfry-so they called it-well, and had more than once rung the bell in the daytime in sport; and now Sophia thought that if she were only there, she might easily raise such an alarm as would effectually frighten away the robbers. But how to reach the belfry? The only way was across the very hall where the robbers were now at work. Sophia could not make up her mind to go even a step down the stairs; and as to consulting her mother in her present paralyzed state, that was altogether useless. She stood irresolute, herself almost losing her senses with fear, but neither mov-

"Sophia, Sophia! can't you do anything to This appeal had a wholesome effect. Nerving herself by an almost superhuman effort, the brave girl replied: "I will try, mamma; but you must stay

"Not alone, Sophia," she answered. "I dare not stay alone. You shall not leave me." "I must mamma," she replied. "I must leave you. You can lock your door behind me. I don't think they will come upstairs. Quick; follow me and lock the door." She stole out and her mother rose up and went after her. Just as she was going out the old woman caught her hand again.

"Sophia, you must not leave me; I shall die before you come back." "Lock the door," Sophia whispered again. And her mother heard her; for, as she stole into the dark passage, the door was softly shut upon her and the key was turned.

It was a truly frightful position for the girl. Nearly mad as she was with fear, sheyet gathered up courage how she knew not -to steal a few steps down stairs. And now the noises in the hall were quite audible, and again she was just about to fly back and take her chance in her own room with her mother. Just at this juncture a little bit of courage seemed to kindle in her breast, and she waited a moment, and then stole three steps down stairs. Here, at the turning, she saw plainly that there was light in the hall: and somehow the sense that she was in the darkness and the robbers in the light gave her a sensation of returning security. She listened, trembled, and then with shaking imbs ventured three steps down the second flight. She could distinctly hear the burglars talking, and as one of them gave a low. brutal laugh she shuddered to think what wretches were near. Sophia always declared that the next few steps she took unconsciously, and that she only knew herself when she found she was peering from the dark angle

of the stairs into the hall.

Three men were there. It was evident that they had mistaken an old oak chest which stood against the wall for a depository of valuables, and this they were now trying to force open. They were quite occupied for the moment, and from her dark angle Sophia could plainly observe their movements. It was curious that now, when fear might altogether have overcome her, she began to feel a renewal of courage. She looked across the dark hall to the passage on the other side which she wished to reach, and she resolved while the robbers were still engaged upon the chest to make a dart across. Several seconds she waited, until she saw an opportunity, and while the men were trying to force the oaker lid, she flew across the hall, and was in the passage on the other side, hidden from view. But now, as she slowly groped her way along the passage, a new terror arose. What if the belfry door should be locked? The room was never used, and it might well be that the key had been taken away. The bare idea so terrified her that she scarce dared to creep to the door, lest her fear should be verified. But there was no returning, and the next moment she felt the door, and finding the handle she turned it slowly, and to her unspeakable joy the door opened at her touch. O, what a rush of relief she felt! Her position might still be perilous; but the greatest danger was past. She crept round the wall, feeling her way until her hands touched the bell rope; and then, drawing a breath for the effort, she pulled hard and fast, and immedi ately the iron tongue outside began to answer her back in tones that seemed to tell that she was once again in communication with the honest world outside, and need fear no more. Stroke after stroke the bell sent its resonant alarm out upon the midnight; and at each note Sophia tugged with fresh energy, and the faithful bell above seemed to grow more vehement as she with gathering strength applied to it for help.

CHAPTER II.

VERY SHORT CHAPTER. This passage, the only morsel of sensation in our boudoir story, has been dismissed as rapidly as was possible. Indeed, it would never have been told at all, had it not been a link in the chain of incident on which the history depends.

Of course, all Kettlewell applauded our Sophia. Her midnight descent, her flight across the hall, her plucky behavior at the bell rope—everything she had done was praised. The burglars fled at the first peal, but Sophia kept on ringing until all the neighbors were aroused; and then such a congregation of servants and others had gathered in the house and grounds that fear was not to be thought of. All of us applauded her quickness of thought about the belfry; the only person who spoke in anything like a qualified tone being Egerton, who remarked that he was far from wishing to cast any slur on Sor hia, but still he must say that she would have made a great deal more noise if she had used the Chinese gong which stood in the hall. For sounding an alarm, Egerton said, there was nothing like a Chinese gong. Sophia, in the gentlest way, but with laughter trembling on her lips, pointed out that the gong stood just where the robbers were working; upon which Egerton retorted that he had not said anything about where it stood, but only that for sounding an alarm there was nothing like a Chinese gong. Now, how would you expect the little mother to have acted? To have denied her own abject terror, and attenuated Sophia's

prayery! She did nothing of the kind. "I was dead with fear," she said, in her gay way. "Courage is not one of my vir tues. I could no more have gone down those stairs and past those dreadful men than I could raise that piano with my finger. Dence take my heart!"-sometimes, in her casy moods, she would let fly an expression of this sort-"I thought it would never beat again! And Sophia was as cool as if she were going down to see a visitor. Sophia ought to be a soldier's wife; she ought to be a soldier herself. Few women would have acted as she

One happy result for the poor girl was that her mother's wrath was not so much appeased as effaced. The whole Prendergast ncident was for the time forgotten; and when Mrs. Barbara Temple's mind reverted to the matter, she admitted to herself that in charging Sophia with weakness she made a great mistake. She still deplored the issue of the affair, but she never again reproached her daughter, and she even made one or two indirect apologies for her severity of speech, and these we may be sure Sophia was only too willing to accept. And now there began quite an era in

did that night. Really, I would not have be-

lieved she had it in her."

Sophia's life. Her lover was absent, and they were not allowed to communicate with each other, for on this point Mrs. Temple never relaxed. She was not formally engaged; indeed, she was understood to be open to an offer-a fact which her mother, still following her original policy, took care to publish abroad. Caroline and Sibyl now fully agreed with their mother that Sophia was acting recklessly in allowing the freshness of her youth to pass away under this blighting spell. And all this time, only by the merest chance, seldom-perhaps nevercould she hear anything of Percival Brent. He might be untrue; and even then, according to the words of their agreement, she could not reproach him with incontsancy. It was a trying time for her; but during this period her character was formed, and she who on her fiftieth birthday was with general consent and delight styled "Lady Beauty" learned her secret of charming in this period of anxiety and waiting, when her constancy and her patience were so severely tried. here relate the main incidents of this uneventful period, and having at the same time tried by touches here and there to give you an idea of the maturity of charms toward which Time was bearing our dear heroine. I shall be able in my next book to tell you how it all ended; whether Percival was true or false; whether or not happiness of the kind she expected rewarded the constancy of her pure, glowing, and yet never impatient affection.

> CHAPTER III. MRS. TEMPLE ECONOMIZES.

During the weeks that immediately followed Sophia observed that her mother was very often thoughtful, and would talk to hera number of those signs which denote that we are thinking hard and reasoning with ourselves. She never dropped the smallest allusion to Prendergast, and Sophia, glad of the opportunity, seized the favorable moments, and showered caresses and attentions upon her mother, which the mother for her part received with every mark of satisfaction. Thus the time, which, had it fulfilled Sophia's expectations, would have been one long scene of reproaches and regrets did as a matter of fact glide easily and pleasantly by, giving another illustration of that great common truth, that if we only wait until our troubles actually come they will often turn out no troubles at all. Sophia, however, wondered what the moot case could be that her mother so pondered and argued with her-

"Sophy," the little woman said one morning at breakfast, "this house is too large for us. I shall give it up, and rent a small one rather nearer the town. Our lease expires in September, and I don't fancy another winter in this lonely place."

So this had been the matter of internal debate. Suphia was not at all surprised to find that her mother was giving up the Beeches, for the burglary was a sufficient reason; but when the old woman began to talk of reasons of ecoromy, she concluded that, ashamed to confess to fear, she was excusing her flight by alleging pecuniary motives. Sophia, however, soon found that there was more in the matter than she had imagined.

"I shall keep one carriage in the future, no more," Mrs. Temple said a few days after. "One carriage, one horse, and one man servant. Quite enough for us two." "Mamma," Sophia cried, "the idea of you trotting about in a little brougham with one

horse! How funny you will feel!" "Not at all, dear, so long as the carriage is neat and the horse what a horse should be. Quite enough for us, Sophy. More seems affectation; just like those Dones. Horrid people, with a fresh carriage for every day in the week-and such horses! It strikes me that whenever a vulgarian makes money and retires, being of no family himself, he resolves to have horses with a pedigree. No, no, Sophy, we shall not lose anything by living quietly. Leave that to me, dear; you may safely leave that to me."

Great was the astonishment of Kettlewell. Not that we wondered at Mrs. Temple giving up the Beeches; with us, as with Sophia, the burglary was a sufficient reason for that. But when she chose a small box of a villa near the entrance of the town, and put down two of her carriages, dismissed five of her servants, and in a general way reduced her expenditures by more than one-half, we were surprised indeed. Had Sophia been married the affair would have been intelligible, but who, for any motive except necessity, ever heard of a match-making mother lowering her mode of living until all her daughters were settled? There was a great deal of talk in Kettlewell, and a great deal of whispering. Had Mrs. Temple been living beyond her means? Had she made some bad speculation? Was this only the prelude to a final crash? All these questions were asked freely, and most of us had some surmise to make; but nobody quite agreed with anybody else except in one point-Mrs. Temple was not the woman to retrench without urgent reason; and after all, the most likely reason was that she had not the money to maintain her original grandeur. One spiteful lady friend congratulated her ironicall behind her back on having married two daughters well, at all events, and said that even if the mother died a bankrupt, dear Sophia would always have a comfortable home with her sisters.

Car and Sibyl were as much amazed as the rest, and, not daring to inquire of their mother, they beset Sophia with questions which she was unable to answer. Sibyl was especially searching for reasons why, her husband having directed her mind to the subject in his elephantine way.
"It is not for us," he said, pausing as he

stirred his coffee-for they were at breakfast-"it is not for us to ask questions, but still your mother's conduct is unaccountable. If you could find out whether she has been speculating, or if her affairs are involved, I might interfere with advantage-to your

mother." Goldmore, as he said this, cleared his throat and shifted his chin between his shirt collar in an imposing way. The chin was very well shaved, and the shirt collar very white and stiff, as is invariably the case with millionaires in the morning. "I might advise with your mother," the great man added, seeing that his wife did

not speak, "and tender her my aid." TO BE CONTINUED.

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